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ABSTRACT

A survey of teaching practices and a face-to-face sharing institute were designed for an experiment to identify innovative practices, to legitimize the sharing of them, and to develop criteria for evaluating the relevance and importance of particular inventions. This experiment was part of a project involving a state organization of teachers and teams of teachers in local school systems in which the former provided an organizing link and the latter acted as researchers and disseminators. A questionnaire discovered new educational practices which were evaluated by a rating scale especially developed for the project. Documentary descriptions of each nominated practice were placed in a catalogue and distributed to participating schools. The teachers' response to the catalogue was measured by a postcard questionnaire. A forcefield analysis of the factors supporting and hindering active innovation resulted in a sharing institute focused on the resistance to diffusion. The objectives, design, operation plans, and program outline of the institute are followed by staff observations. Three nominated teaching practices, the rating scale, a documentary description from the catalogue, and the forcefield analysis are reproduced. (Author/KSM)

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IDENTIFYING, DOCUMENTING, EVALUATING, AND SHARING INNOVATIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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IDENTIFYING, DOCUMENTING, EVALUATING, AND SHARING INNOVATIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICES

The Innovation Survey: A Design for Identification, Documentation, and Dissemination of Innovative Teaching Practices

Exploratory work on the problems of effective diffusion of innovative educational practices reveals quite a high level of resistance and apathy in the process of identifying, seeking out, or sharing new practices. The innovative teachers indicate many inhibitions to "blowing their own horn." Also many of the most creative teachers do not realize they have invented a significant practice. They can not conceptualize or qrticulace about their own creations without help. The concept of social invention does not exist in the culture of classroom teachers. On the other hand, there are inhibiting factors which restrain colleagues from seeking out and using inventive fellow teachers as resources. Interviews with teachers reveal that probably a majority of them feel that asking a colleague for help would be seen by the administrator, as well as the colleague, as a sign of weakness--of professional inadequacy.

The challenge of this undesirable state of affairs led us to experiment with designs for identifying innovative practices, legitimizing the sharing of them, and developing criteria for evaluating the relevance and importance of particular inventions.

The Survey of Teaching Practices

To launch the project, orientation meetings were held for principals, teachers, and area team members of four neighboring school

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systems. These meetings stressed the contribution which techniques of identifying, evaluating, sharing, adopting, and adapting selected teaching practices would make to the quality of education and to the improvement of each teacher's repetoire of educational devices. The project team members acted as consultants to help develop a survey of teachings practices and to support the dissemination of the innovative practices which were discovered. The teachers' task was to provide the description of innovations, to share these with one another, and to adapt these practices to suit their own needs. Such active involvement in the survey served, hopefully, to modify a teacher's self-concept so that he could come to see himself as an educational leader and an active developer and adopter of good practices rather than as an "educational mechanic" working routinely with someone else's tools.

The first step in this multi-faceted program was to develop an effective mechanism for retrieving innovations and help teachers experience the process of search and evaluation. Therefore, teachers and curriculum coordinators in the four districts completed a questionnaire which asked each of them to briefly describe new educational practices they had recently tried. They also nominated other teachers whom they believed were trying new approaches with their classes. In this way, the over 500 teachers in the four districts nominated and described some 200 innovative classroom practices. This first step was used to make teachers aware that educational innovation exists in their school, and that such innovation can be recorded in a form which is potentially useable by other teachers.

The form on which these teaching activities were nominated asked for a brief description of the practice, the necessary physical and human resources demanded by the practice, and the goals of the practice. It also asked teachers to analyze the amount and kinds of preparation required of teachers and pupils in using the practice. Finally, the nominating teacher evaluated the success of the practice. Some of the questions used on this form were:

1. Please describe the teaching practice.
2. What resources did you use in developing this idea?
3. What goals were you working toward with this practice?
4. What happened while you were trying the new practice?
5. From your point of view, how successful was the practice in terms of your own comfort and feelings of effectiveness?
6. Did some aspects work less well than others?
7. What pitfalls should a teacher be careful to avoid?

Three examples of these nominated practices are reproduced here as illustrations:

Practice #17

Teaching Interpersonal and Intergroup Understanding

Classroom Goal: The teacher was interested in increasing pupil mental health by providing opportunities for pupils to: (1) observe other pupils' behavior in unique circumstances, (2) appreciate the circumstances which lead to misunderstandings among people, and (3) promote insight into their own interpersonal behavior.

Methods and Resources Used: The teacher decided to use role playing as a classroom technique to promote a real understanding of how people think and feel under varying situations or circumstances. One example was role playing a situation centered on an interracial problem. By varying the historical perspective of the situation, the teacher could highlight the growing differences between North and South from the Civil War period to the present time. Classroom discussion after role playing examined the circumstances that seemed to produce ~~the~~ changes in the behavior of various groups of people.

Evaluation: The pupils' reactions were favorable. In some cases, the pupils seemed to develop a more objective viewpoint in their attempts to understand bigotry and prejudice. Pupils were also more involved in learning the history of the Civil War period.

Contributing Teacher: Albert Ives
Belleville High School
Belleville, Michigan

Practice #18

Teaching Interpersonal and Intergroup Understanding

Classroom Goal: The teacher was interested in fostering the development of the social and emotional maturity of her pupils. Observation of classroom behavior indicated that these pupils were below average in this phase of development. She hoped to increase their skills in learning to relate with, understand and accept other pupils.

Methods and Resources Used: The teacher decided to plan classroom discussions around one topic, such as accepting and using criticism offered by others. Topics were chosen in which the children could readily see themselves. These topics were selected from the real experiences of the pupils. First, a short story was read illustrating the topic for discussion. Classroom discussion of this problem situation centered on: (1) diagnosis of the situation, (2) circumstances that led to interpersonal difficulty, e.g., misunderstanding the other person's intention, and (3) listing alternate courses of behavior for the persons involved. Further questions from the pupils were encouraged and discussed by the class. Specific pupils were not identified with any particular problems.

Evaluation: The pupils indicated they enjoyed this procedure greatly. It seemed to provide a pleasant contrast to the normal classroom routine.

Contributing Teacher: Susan Renfrew
Rawsonville Elementary
Belleville, Michigan

Practice #20

Teaching about the Formation of Feelings of Prejudice

Classroom Goal: The teacher was interested in helping children in an integrated classroom understand the basis, emotional meaning, and university of prejudice. She wanted the children to recognize that all people are prejudiced to a certain extent. Further, she wanted the children to appreciate the personal bases of prejudice and to be able to analyse their feelings from this viewpoint.

Methods and Resources Used: The class had been discussing the behavior of people who feel inferior or superior to others. They had read about prejudice before, but had not discussed it as it related to themselves. The teacher focused the discussion on feelings of superiority and rivalry. The class found examples of rivalries between homeroom sections, high school athletic teams, colleges and universities in Michigan, and competition in boy-girl relationships. The feeling that one group or person was naturally better than another, from the point of view of the person in that group, was found to be an example of prejudice. The class felt that one important dimension of, and possibly the basis of, prejudice was pride in self and/or group.

A discussion of racial prejudice followed. Current television programs on this topic were used as a resource. One program, "East Side-West Side," prompted a discussion on the question, "Why do some people dislike Blacks?".

Classroom discussion was the primary teaching method.

Evaluation: The teacher reported that more than half of the students were very interested; for others, the classroom discussion may have been too verbal and abstract, or too threatening. Four months later, many of the students remembered the discussion and evidenced meaningful learning.

Contributing Teacher: Joan Chesler
Romulus Junior High School
Romulus, Michigan

Evaluating the Practices

The method for evaluating the most promising of the nominated practices was developed by a joint team of social scientists from the university's Center for Research on the Utilization of Scientific Knowledge and members of the Michigan Department of Classroom Teachers, with reactions from the project's State Steering Committee composed of several state and regional officers of the Department of Classroom Teachers, and selected curriculum directors, school administrators, and classroom teachers. Four goals were advanced by this group:

1. Select those teaching ideas which are truly new and different, eliminating those practices which are probably already used by a large majority of teachers.
2. Select those teaching practices which are designed to cope with relatively universal classroom problems. (Teaching practices designed to meet unique classroom situations were to be excluded in order to enhance the utility of these promising practices for a large group of teachers.)
3. Select those proactices which are most adequately developed and seem to demonstrate the greatest potential for accomplishing the stated purpose of the practice.
4. Select innovative teaching ideas which attempt to enhance students' motivation for learning and/or improve the classroom socio-emotional climate. (A special goal for this project.)

All the nominated practices were placed in a pool. Each practice was evaluated by four or five educators drawn from both elementary and secondary school levels, and from classroom teachers, administrators, and social scientists. Evaluation team members did not evaluate practices nominated by teachers in their own school district.

Criteria developed by the State Advisory Committee and the staff for evaluation of the educational significance and potential usefulness of teaching practices were formulated into a rating scale which each member of the evaluation team used to rate each practice. (See Rating Scale for Evaluation of a Practice on the following page.)

Evaluating the practices was not a simple problem. Many teachers and administrators "intuitively" know what is a "good" teaching practice and what is a "bad" one. Using specific criteria and scales, however, required an effort at systematic, scientific, and objective definition of useable teaching practices. The evaluation of these collected practices was designed to encourage teachers to explicitly define and determine standards for wide-scale evaluation of teaching practices. This was conceived of as one step in the construction of a more systematic approach to education that would shift the teacher's role from one of uncritical acceptance of innovations to a critical assessment of own needs and the quality of those new practices available for consideration.

The evaluation committee selected 30 of the most promising practices for immediate distribution to all participating teachers. Fuller descriptions for all of the selected practices were written up and

Rating Scale for Evaluation of a Practice

Criteria dealing with soundness of the practice:

1. Does the practice appear soundly based in theory or research evidence? — 1 2 3 4 5 (Low … High)
2. Is there evidence available from teacher or staff evaluation regarding the value of the practice? — 1 2 3 4 5 (Low … High)

Criteria dealing with potential adaptability and spreadability of the practice:

3. Will it solve the problem, or accomplish an important purpose (from the viewpoint of the teacher?) — 1 2 3 4 5 (Low … High)
4. Is the practice easily adaptable to a teacher's own style of teaching? — 1 2 3 4 5 (No … Yes)
5. Does the practice require a great investment of time or energy? — 1 2 3 4 5 (Yes … No)
6. Does the practice require special demonstrations or training? — 1 2 3 4 5 (Yes … No)
7. Can the practice be tried on a limited basis? — 1 2 3 4 5 (No … Yes)
8. Can details of the practice be communicated easily? — 1 2 3 4 5 (No … Yes)
9. Does the practice require special physical equipment or props? — 1 2 3 4 5 (Yes … No)
10. Will the practice be acceptable to administrators (principals, curriculum leadership personnel, superintendents)? — 1 2 3 4 5 (Low … High)
11. Does the practice take into account pupil differences (e.g., age, sex, social class)? — 1 2 3 4 5 (No … Yes)
12. Is the practice dependent upon gaining the cooperation of other teachers? — 1 2 3 4 5 (Dependent … Not dependent)

13. Does the practice fit easily into the "accepted" curriculum? 1 2 3 4 5 (No — Yes)

14. Does the practice offer the potential of positive feedback (visible success)? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

Criteria having to do with the significance of the practice for a specific program goal (in this case, enhancing pupil motivation for learning and improving classroom socio-emotional climate)?

15. Does the practice help pupils to discover and use the academic skills of others in the class? 1 2 3 4 5 (No — Yes)

16. Does the practice increase individual pupil responsibility and motivation for learning? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

17. Does the practice involve pupils in planning, executing and evaluating it? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

18. Does the practice enhance development of peer relations and standards in support of learning? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

19. Does the practice contribute to pupils' positive attitudes toward school work? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

20. Does the practice significantly contribute to pupils' feelings of self worth? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

21. Does the practice significantly contribute to supportive peer relations and standards conducive to mental health? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

22. Does the practice contribute to a positive pupil-teacher relationship? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

23. Does the practice help the group to have a wider variety of friendships? 1 2 3 4 5 (Low — High)

these were approved by the contributing teacher. The 30 practices were bound together in a "Catalogue of Promising Practices." This catalogue was bound in a loose-leaf notebook. One catalogue was provided for each three teachers in the building with a routing slip with three names on it. Staff meetings were held in each school to prepare the way for this distribution.

Getting Fuller Documentation

In preparation for requests from interested teachers, we elicited fuller documentation of the 30 practices from the innovating teachers. An outline for a detailed description of a practice was prepared and given to each of the contributing teachers. In some cases, a field trip and interview was needed to get the documentation needed for the 30 writeups. By way of example, the documentary description of Practice 17 follows:

Teaching Interpersonal and Intergroup Understanding

Contributing Teacher: Albert Ives
Belleville High School
Van Buren School District

1. General Description:

Along with teaching the history of the Civil War period, I was interested in developing interpersonal and intergroup understanding among my students. I hoped to accomplish this by providing opportunities for my students: (1) to observe other peoples' behavior in unique circumstances, (2) to appreciate the circumstances which lead to misunderstandings among people, and (3) to promote insight into their own interpersonal behavior.

Classroom discussions on prejudice, supplementary lectures, and role playing as techniques were used to further these goals. In one role playing episode, students played the parts of typical citizens of the times, both North and South, depicting their established viewpoints. In a second role playing episode, a debate took place in a mock senate on the question of secession from the Union.

The teacher saw the students' reactions to these experiences as favorable. They seemed to develop more objective viewpoints in their attempts to understand bigotry and prejudice. They gained new respect for each other as individuals and, in the process, developed skills in the art of constructive thinking. The students were also more highly motivated in learning the history of the Civil War period.

PROCEDURE	ANTICIPATING POSSIBLE BARRIERS	SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING BARRIERS
II. Preparation:		
The class discussed the nature of prejudice, providing a basis for studying the Civil War period.		
Several forms of group work had been used over a period of time so the student would learn how to function in a framework of cooperation and compromise.		
III. Practice:		
The class studied intensively the Civil War period of American history.	At first students were lukewarm to this area of study.	When the students became involved in role playing, interest increased.
Students supplemented their text book by using school and public libraries.		
Emphasis was placed on individual research beyond the basic facts provided by lecture and texts.	Some students were not prepared to do individual research.	Teacher can act as a consultant in helping pupil locate materials, organize their reading, etc.
A role playing technique was used to vitalize the learning experience. Members of the class portrayed typical citizens of the North and the South during this period. They enacted skits portraying the growing differences of North and South and the conflict of Northern and Southern ideology over slavery.		

PROCEDURE	ANTICIPATING POSSIBLE BARRIERS	SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING BARRIERS
III. Practice: continued		
A mock senate debate was held on the question of secession from the Union. Any arguments offered had to be of sensible quality, although irrational impulses were not entirely excluded.	Students may not prepare for the debate seriously.	Another class was present to witness the debate. The students performed well and this proved to be the highlight of the study.
The problems of this period of time were then projected to the present day in which the roots of the problem have not been removed.		
Academic outcomes were evaluated by written tests. The performance of those students involved in role playing was also evaluated.	Attitudes could not be reflected in their grade.	

IV. Evaluation:

DESIRED OUTCOMES

To provide students with a working knowledge of the Civil War period, as well as understanding of the men and personalities behind the facts.

To provide an understanding of different points of view, not only from this period, but on a broader basis, including man's relation to man within the framework of humanity.

To encourage constructive thinking.

IV. Evaluation: continued

OBSERVED OUTCOMES

I felt pupils' academic learning was more than satisfactory.

Most students demonstrated a noticeable and positive change in their attitude toward history.

I was personally satisfied with my first experience with this particular practice.

V. Materials and Resources:

A. The school text used was Wilder, Ludlum and Brown, This is America's Story.

B. School and public libraries were used by students to supplement their individual research in the Civil War period.

C. Visual aids such as bulletin board materials and American history maps relating to the study were used. Films and slides would have been desirable.

D. A teaching colleague served as a personal source of additional insight into this period of history and the men who made it.

Evaluating Teachers' Response to the Catalogue

One way in which the catalogue's effectiveness was judged was by asking teachers to return a postcard indicating their interest in using one or more of the practices described there in.

Post-Card Responses to Book of Promising Teaching Practices

Response to Book	N	Percent
a. Don't understand book	I	12%
b. Found nothing new in book	47	
c. Will probably try one of the practices on my own	47	25%
d. Would like more information about one or more practices	58	
e. Did not return postcard	258	63%
TOTAL	411	

As this tabulation shows, most teachers failed to respond to the questionnaire. However, of the total sample, some 25 percent said that they intended to try one of the practices or that they would like more information. A second postcard survey, however, indicated that these respondents actually tried very few of them. The response to the postcard inquiry is as follows. There are a number of reasons for this apparent lack of success in stimulating diffusion. First, not every teacher who innovates will adopt another teacher's innovation. In fact, many teachers devise their own procedures precisely because they do not feel open to use others as resources. One example is the social "isolate" in the staff. These individuals show a relatively high rate of innovations, but neither share with nor borrow from others. The quality of the innovation is probably often quite poor because of the lack of testing that could come from interaction with others.

The research report indicates that many variables affect a teacher's willingness to try out a new practice, such as colleague relationships, relations to the principal, years in the school, demographic background, membership in educational organizations, and need for power or achievement.

To probe more deeply into teacher reactions, followup data were collected from the 25 percent of teachers who responded to the postcards. Twenty percent of them had tried at least one of the disseminated practices. Many of the others indicated that they felt lack of time had been an important factor in nonutilization of the selected practices. Others said that they had lost their booklets, had seen them only briefly and had not taken notes, or had received them too late in the year. Still others said that the practices were not adaptable to the grade level they were teaching, that they did not have the proper equipment, or that the practices were not described in sufficient detail. Some of the teachers with many years of experience felt that the practices were not really new. Many of the younger teachers, however, felt that the practices were very valuable to them since they had not used or heard of these practices before.

A challenging question emerges from this followup inquiry. Were the selected practices or their descriptions inadequate or are such statements defensive reactions to novelty and change--challenges? It is quite possible that many teachers sought a way to rationalize their nonadoption of these practices because of implications for change effort and the value confrontations implicit in seriously considering the new practices, even if colleagues had rated them as good quality innovations. Or perhaps the sense of lack of the needed behavioral skills was a key blockage to tryout.

The Challenge of Stimulating More Effective Dissemination

The results of these efforts to retrieve, document, and disseminate the catalogue of good practices confirmed the original hypothesis of the project staff that most successful educational innovation and adoption requires crucial elements of interpersonal process. A relatively small number of practitioners are able, in terms of motivation and skill, to respond openly and effectively to new practices made available to them as written descriptions. Additional conditions of facilitation are necessary.

About this time the project staff met with the teams of collaborators in each school system to analyze the factors that support and hinder the active innovation and diffusion of creative teaching practices. During an evening meeting of brainstorming, the following forcefield analysis was generated as a summary of their experience:

Forces Relevant to the Facilitation and Hindrance of Innovation and Diffusion of Teaching Practices

Facilitating Forces	Hindering Forces
1. Peer and Authority Relations	
A. Sharing sessions or staff bulletins become a matter of school routine.	A. Little communication among teachers.
B. Public recognition given to innovators and adopters; innovation-diffusion seen as a cooperative task.	B. Competition for prestige teachers.
C. Sharing ideas is expected and rewarded; norms support asking for and giving help; regular talent search for new ideas.	C. Norms enforce privatism.
D. Area team liaison supports new ideas.	D. Colleagues reject ideas.
E. Principal or superintendent supports innovation-diffusion activity.	E. Principal not interested in new ideas.
F. Principal helps create a staff atmosphere of sharing and experimentation.	F. School climate doesn't support experimentation.
G. Staff meetings used as two-way informing and educating sessions.	G. Principal doesn't know what's going on.
H. Teachers influence the sharing process.	H. Teacher ideas don't matter.
I. Inservice training program gives skills needed to innovate and adapt.	I. No continuing education program for staff.
2. Personal Attitudes	
A. Seeking new ways.	A. Resistance to change.
B. Seeking peer and consultant help.	B. Fear of evaluation and rejection or failure.
C. Always open to adapting and modifying practices.	C. Dogmatism about already knowing about new practices.
D. Public rewards for professional growth.	D. Professional growth not important.
E. See groups as endemic and relevant for academic learning.	E. Negative feelings about group work.
F. Understand connection between mental health and academic learning.	F. Mental health is "extra."
G. Optimism.	G. Pessimism.
H. Test ideas slowly.	H. Afraid to experiment.
I. Suiting and changing practice to fit one's own style and class.	I. Resistance to imitating others.

Forces Relevant to the Facilitation and Hindrance of Innovation and Diffusion of Teaching Practices

Facilitating Forces	Hindering Forces
3. Characteristics of the Practice	
A. Relevant to universal student problems.	A. Does not meet the needs of a class.
B. Can be done a little at a time.	B. Requires a lot of energy.
C. Consultant and peer help available; needed skills are clearly outlined.	C. Requires new skills.
D. Clearly aids student growth.	D. Requires change in teacher values.
E. A behavioral change with no new gimmicks.	E. Requires new facilities.
F. Built in evaluation to see progress.	F. Won't work.
G. Innovation has tried a new twist.	G. Not new.
H. Student, not subject, oriented.	H. Not for my grade level or subject.
I. No social practice can be duplicated exactly.	I. Effectiveness reduced if practice gains general use.
4. Physical and Temporal Arrangements	
A. Staff meetings used for professional growth; substitutes hired to free teacher(s) to visit other classrooms; lunchtime used for discussions; students sent home for an afternoon so teachers can all meet together.	A. No time to get together.
B. Extra clerical help provided.	B. Too many clerical duties to have time to share ideas.
C. Staff meetings for everyone to get together occasionally; grade level or departmental meetings.	C. Classrooms are isolated.
D. Meetings held in classrooms.	D. No rooms to meet in.

From this type of review of the experiences with the dissemination of the survey of practices, the project team decided that, instead of expanding this design to a larger number of school systems in the state, they should focus more intensively on the issues of resistance to diffusion

The diagnosis of difficulty seemed to lead in two directions:

1. It seemed necessary to introduce more interpersonal face-to-face process into the sharing of practices.

2. It seemed crucial to work on creating, in a school staff, the psychological and social conditions of readiness and motivation to innovate and to adapt the practices developed by others.

A DESIGN FOR A FACE-TO-FACE SHARING OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

In the previous section, one approach to the identifying and sharing of creative teaching was reported -- the survey, documenaation, and dissemination of selected practices.

Another design developed and tried out by the project team is the "Sharing Institute". We summarize here an illustration of this design.

Objectives of the Institute

1. To help teachers confront the need to share professional practice and to understand and cope with the typical restraints against sharing.

2. To provide an opportunity for teachers to have a successful experience in sharing their teaching inventions with each other.

3. To provide a model of sharing activity which could be adapted to their own building as a continuing supportive activity.

The Operational Plan

The members of the school system committee, working with the consultant from project team, recruited a collaborator from each building to help invite the teachers to the Sharing Institute. The administration approved of a Teacher Institute Day during which teachers might participate in this activity or other types of professional development activity. The design for the day was jointly planned by the inside-outside committee.

The Institute Design and Program

1. Coming Together (9:30a.m.)

The cafeteria served as a conference center. Teachers were met by a member of the host committee and made out name badges identifying themselves, their school, and grade level or subject matter. Coffee was available.

2. Getting Started (10:00a.m.)

The administrator welcomed the group, emphasized his belief in the importance of professional colleagueship in the sharing of professional problems and know-how. He introduced the local teacher chairman of the institute committee. She introduced her building collaborators; then, introduced the project team consultant who was to start the program.

3. Orientation to the Concept of Sharing Inventions (10:15a.m.)

The university social scientist compared the process by which ideas are diffused in teaching with the same process in such fields as medicine, industry, and agriculture. He said that when new practices are tried in these nonteaching fields, the measurement of their success or failure is relatively quick and easy. The sick patient does or does not recover; the new machine does or does not do the job; the new fertilizer does or does not produce a greater crop yield.

However, when tying to measure the effects of a new teaching practice, practitioners are faced with such imponderables as human values, feelings, and behavior patterns. Thus, they can never be sure whether the learning that takes place is because of, or in spite of, the new practice. Furthermore, the introduction of a new teaching practice often involves making a major change in the accustomed way of doing or looking at things--a difficult task even for those who wish to do so.

The consultant stated that if education and teaching are ever to be able to use new knowledge with the effectiveness that is used in some other fields, educators will have to bring every resource of the social sciences to bear on this important area of changes in human behavior. He challenged the teachers present to acquire some needed skills in sharing practices with each other. He said that the sharing process might create greater change if the teachers would discuss new practices in a disciplined way.

4. The Forcefield of Support and Resistance to Sharing (10:45a.m.)

The large conference group then broke up into groups of eight to ten. Each member had a copy of the conversation guide which briefly presented the idea that the amount of communication between colleagues is determined by "forces against communication" and "forces favoring communication." Some of these forces are within us, some in our relations with colleagues, some in the climate of the building, and some in the larger school system. Each group was asked to make a forcefield of forces supporting and inhibiting teachers in the sharing of their teaching inventions. Each group was asked to recruit a reporter who would write directly on a prepared ditto master sheet so that all group reports could be run off immediately.

5. Sharing Key Ideas (11:15a.m.)

The group reconvened for a brief sharing from the reporters of key forces supporting and inhibiting sharing of practices. Some of the forces they identified in their reports are summarized below:

Barriers to Sharing

<u>Within the school</u>: lack of scheduled time to discuss new ideas; lack of administrative co-operation; class load too large; too much time taken up with "problem" children; too departmentalized (junior high school); different maturity levels among the children;

unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships among the staff; difficulty of communicating with other staff members because of poorly planned building layout; failure to follow through on promising practice when teacher who introduced it leaves the school.

Within the school system: lack of communication between schools; no time to visit or observe what is going on in other buildings; shortage or lack of consultants; uncertainty as to principal's response to the idea of sharing; conflict between teacher organizations.

Within myself. lack of self-confidence; fear of criticism; disinterest in sharing my ideas with others; fear of asking for or giving advice; lack of personal initiative or enthusiasm for my work; uncertainty about my effectiveness; differences with colleagues over educational philosophy and goals.

Conditions which Encourage Sharing

Within the school: good communication with teacher who had same children the previous year; frequent grade level meetings; scheduled time for sharing ideas; supportive attitude of the principal; reduced class size; good interpersonal relationships, especially between experienced and probationary teachers; willingness of principal or consultant to act as liaison person in communicating good practices; released time for sharing.

Within the school system: exchange of teacher between buildings; professional visitations; administrative and board support for sharing; up-to-date professional library; system-wide grade level meetings.

Within myself: positive attitude toward change; ability to adjust or adapt to change; self-confidence; desire for professional growth; desire for recognition as a creative teacher; desire to stimulate others; concern for the educational growth of children.

6. Reactions to New Ideas (11:40a.m.)

Just before the general session, ten teachers were recruited at random and received briefings to depict, in a role playing episode, ten different typical responses to new ideas presented by a colleague. The types of response were: "I like my way best," "It's a very doubtful idea," "I'm hired to teach the 3 R's," "What does research say about that?" "It would not work for me," "Give me anything that's different," "Your idea sounds good, but...," "Would the principal approve?", "I'll have to ask the others before I try it."

These episodes seemed to provoke much reflective thinking and added a light dramatic touch to the end of the morning.

7. Identifying and Sharing Practices

After lunch, the participants again broke up into groups--one for each grade level from kindergarten through sixth, plus a separate group for secondary teachers and another for principals and administrators. Each group included one visiting teacher from the other three participating school systems in the Diffusion Project and a staff member from The University of Michigan who acted as a table facilitator.

In the grade-level meetings, the table leader solicited nomination of promising teaching practices by asking each member in turn to contribute a one-minute description of the teaching invention of theirs which they felt would make a contribution to their colleagues. The two or three practices having the greatest relevance for the participants in the group were selected by vote for intensive probing. After the informants had been selected in each group, the workshop leadership oriented inquiry in order to document, for everyone at the workshop the practices they had selected. An interview outline was distributed for everyone to use, and ditto-master sheets were distributed to each table so that a volunteer documentor at each table could record the information coming from the interview of each informant who had been selected by the group to be a resource about his or her teaching practice.

The questions were:

1. What are the purposes of this practice? What are the desired outcomes?

2. What does the practice look like in operation? A step-by-step description of the flow of the activity.

3. What materials, facilities, resources are needed?

4. What skills does the teacher need to be successful?

5. What are the traps to watch out for?

6. How have you evaluated success?

7. Have you tried variations? What adaptations would you suggest from your experience?

The table recorder wrote up the practices selected for description directly on ditto masters. A ditto machine was on a table at the back of the room. Dittoed copies were provided immediately to every participant in the Institute. It was very encouraging to see the active disciplined approach of each work group in probing and analyzing the selected practices, using a colleague as a resource. It was perhaps even more encouraging to see the openness and nondefensiveness of the selected informants in reporting their failures and successes in the development of their particular practice inventions.

8. Evaluation (3:30p.m.)

In the final few minutes of the Institute, the participants filled out a sheet assessing the value of this type of design for professional improvement. Eighty-three percent rated the Institute as helpful or very helpful and seventeen percent expressed doubts as to the value for them. Over ninety percent indicated they would like to attend similar meetings in the future. Some suggested additional activities such as observing the originator of a particular practice, and having consultant help in adapting and trying out the new practice in their own classroom.

Staff Observations of Design for Sharing

The school system teams conducted several subsequent sharing conferences. It is our observation that these were not as successful when they omitted the orientation phase, and when they permitted the sharing sessions to become general discussion sessions without a clear design for a group procedure of selecting particular practices to focus on and conducting group interviews with the selected informants.

Although these sharing sessions are an important step forward in the dissemination of creative practice, there are two major weaknesses. First, the potential adopters need help in evaluating the significance for themselves of the particular invention, using such criteria as those described in the rating scales applied in the previous section. Second, some type of follow-up help from the inventor or a consultant will often be needed at the time that the adopter is ready to try out the new idea.